

PZ
7

.M86Fo

5

FT MEADE
GenColl

FOUR OF THEM



BY LOUISE
CHANDLER
MOULTON.



E.H.M.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. PZ7 Copyright No.

Shelf M86 Fo
5

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



“She came toward me, her small hands outstretched
in welcome.”

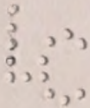
FOUR OF THEM.

BY

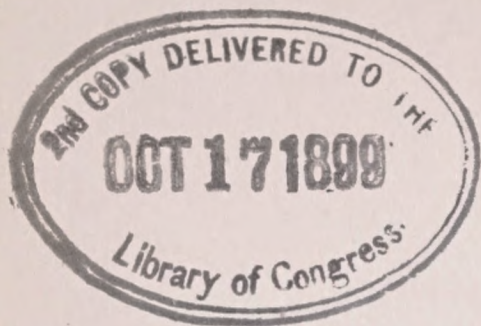
LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON,

AUTHOR OF "BED-TIME STORIES," "MORE BED-TIME STORIES,"
"NEW BED-TIME STORIES," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED.



BOSTON:
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.



PZ7
M86Fo
5

43759

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1873, by
LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON,
In the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

Copyright, 1883, 1890, 1899,
BY LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON.

TWO COPIES RECEIVED.



SECOND COPY

University Press:
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE, U. S. A.

64997
Oct. 7-'99.

FOUR OF THEM.

THE LITTLE SILVER LOCKETS.

A STORY FOR CHRISTMAS.

PERHAPS one girl seldom loves another so dearly as I loved Grace Ellsworth; and that may have been the reason why the wound in my heart, when it came, was so sore and hard to heal. Since I have been a grown woman, and fallen into the way of really thinking about things, it has often seemed to me that in some natures jealousy is the black shadow of love; and you know how exaggerated and distorted our shadows always look.

I remember the first time I ever saw Grace. It was when I was only four years old. That is a long way back to remember; but I have heard people tell of really distinct memories extending back still farther than that. *My* first memory was Grace.

I have been told since that my parents had just moved into the town which was Grace's home. Our mothers had been friends long before, and so one day

500-5-1000

I was taken to see Grace. Do such little creatures as I was then think, I wonder?

I hardly know; but there is a picture before my eyes, as distinct as any I have ever seen on canvas, of a little girl in a white frock, with a red ribbon round her waist, with big black eyes, and yellow hair hanging about her pink cheeks.

She had been told by her mother — but this is one of the things I have learned since — that I would be a little sister for her; and she came towards me, her small hands outstretched in welcome, without the least childish shyness, and said, —

“How ’oo do, Cahwy? I *glad* ’oo come.”

I believe I had the pleasing habit, at that epoch, of saluting strangers with a prolonged wail of doubt and dismay; but this beautiful and friendly vision put to flight the incipient howl, and I submitted to be led away by her in triumph. I think I must have been introduced to a large family of dolls and a storehouse of playthings; but I remember nothing of them, — I remember only Grace.

From that day we were almost daily together. It was the easiest way of amusing us; for I was an only child, and so, to all intents of companionship,

was Grace, though she had a half-sister some ten years older than herself. This half-sister, Mary, was our benignant special providence, and I loved her almost as well as Grace did.

We grew up together, — Grace and I, — went to the same school, studied the same books, dreamed the same dreams. We used to trace out on our maps the routes by which we would like to travel. I have been over some of them since, but not with Grace. We used to go oftenest, in our fancy, to Rome. We were full of interest in Roman history, and we longed to stand among the stately ruins of that old-time glory.

I have been there when the light was soft upon the Alban hills, and the sun was low, and I thought I heard a voice — *her* voice — say, gently, “Here we are, at last;” but I knew it must be the wind among the stone-pines.

When I took my last draught from the Fountain of Trévi, under the spring moonlight, I heard the voice again, or seemed to hear it; but this time it must have been the murmur of the fountain itself, for I know not what tongue they speak in the land where Grace is now.

When we were in our fourteenth year, — have I told you that we were of the same age, Grace and I? — a cousin came to spend the summer and autumn with her. This cousin was a nice enough girl, and really the most prejudiced mind could hardly blame her for having been sent to stay at her Aunt Ellsworth's while her parents made a journey across the Atlantic.

But jealousy and justice are not of the same family, though they begin with the same letter; and I was jealous of Edith Stanhope from the first.

She was a city girl, with pretty little ways of her own, and various manners and customs to which Grace and I were strangers. Her toilets were perfection; but I honestly think she thought no more of them than we did of our brown Holland frocks. She would have been called handsomer than either of us, I have no doubt; and yet to me her pink and white face had no charm comparable to that of Grace's rather pale face, with the great dark eyes, full of truth and tenderness.

At first, Grace tried to make Edith and me friends; and no doubt it was my fault that she did not succeed. I wanted Grace quite to myself, as I had had

her all my life ; and because I could not so have her, I was touchy and disagreeable ; and soon Miss Stanhope let me see clearly enough that she returned my indifference. All the same, she was Grace's guest, and Grace could not leave her to come to me as of old.

When I went there, I could never see my darling alone, and I grew to think my lot very hard. I was an imaginative girl, and I took refuge in melancholy poetry, and even dropped into rhymes myself, in which I bewailed my cruel fate, and accused my friend of stony-hearted ingratitude and indifference.

Grace always had an uncomfortable amount of common-sense ; and when, one day, I left the most melancholy of these rhymed lamentations in her desk at school, I saw her smile as she read it, — a smile full of honest fun, which I magnified into scorn and ridicule. My vanity was as sorely wounded as my heart, and I at once took open issue with her. I accused her of preferring her cousin. I told her grandiloquently that *she* had taught me how little a lifelong friendship was worth.

Shall I ever forget the incredulous and astonished look in her eyes ? She was always gentle, though far firmer than I ; and she spoke quietly and sweetly, —

“Of course you don’t *mean* anything you are saying, Carry, but do you think you ought to say such things, even in jest?”

“I am in no mood for jesting,” I replied, with the high-mightiness of one whose fourteenth birthday was just past. “Our friendship has not been a jest to *me*, nor am *I* the one who has thrown you aside for another!”

Her eyes grew sad in the midst of their lingering incredulity, as if conviction were slowly coming to her that I was in earnest.

“Can it be possible, Carry,” she said, still gently, “that you really think I have treated you ill, — that I have ceased to love you, — I, who have loved you all my life?”

Her very gentleness angered me. “What is love worth,” I cried, “that will make no sacrifice for its object? Will you leave Miss Edith Stanhope alone, and come and pass every other afternoon with me, as you used?”

With all Grace’s gentleness, she was not wanting either in self-respect or in spirit, and she answered me very firmly, —

“No, Carry, I will *not* leave my cousin to spend

every other afternoon alone while she is my guest; and you ought not to like me so well if I would."

I suppose I knew in my own soul that she was right; and that very knowledge made me the more determined. Besides, my jealousy flamed more fiercely than ever; and jealousy, you know, is cruel.

"Very well," I said. "*Keep* Miss Edith Stanhope, and I wish you joy of her. Perhaps, when she goes away, your ladyship will condescend to think of me again; but I may have learned other ways of passing my afternoons by that time. Good-by."

I thought this address very withering, I remember. Grace half put out her hand to me, as if she would detain me. Then she evidently thought better of it, and turned away and joined her cousin. This conversation had been held in a corner of the school-yard, and after it was over Grace and Edith walked away together.

I went home alone. That was in September. October and November came and went, and still the estrangement between Grace and me continued. We nodded to each other when we met, with a distant politeness; we even said good-morning, if our paths crossed; but this was all.

Sometimes I saw a wistful look in Grace's dear, dark eyes, and some word ready to be spoken seemed to tremble on her lips; but I took no notice. My jealousy was like an actual, haunting presence, which never forsook me.

The first day of December my mother gave me a twenty-dollar gold-piece. It was the sum which for some years had been given to each of us — Grace and me — on the first of December, with which to make our Christmas presents.

Our mothers had thought, wisely, that we ought to have some experience in the use of money, and we were both ambitious to make the most and best of it. Our presents for each other were always a grand surprise, reserved for Christmas Eve, but about every other item we consulted.

I wondered if Grace had already received her gold-piece, and whether she would miss me as much in planning how to use it as I should miss her. Then the thought crossed my mind that I should have the more for others, as, of course, I should buy nothing for Grace.

And then came a sudden, swift revulsion of feeling. Not buy anything for Grace, who had been my heart's

delight all my life, ever since that first day when she had put out her baby hand and said, "How 'oo do, Cahwy? I *glad* 'oo come"!

I tried to shut my heart against her image. I said to myself that no one would deny it was hard that, when we had been all in all to each other for all those years, another person should come and swallow up Grace altogether.

But conscience lifted up her voice and reminded me that it was not Grace's fault that I had not been with her as much as before, and shared her daily life with her cousin as I had shared it when she was alone.

"Great good that would have been," I answered aloud to the inward voice, hoping thus to silence it; "*great* good, with always missy, the cousin, to hear every word that we said!"

But try how I might, I could not make myself comfortable. I began to think I could not help buying Grace's present. Perhaps I would not give it to her; perhaps I would *send* it on Christmas Day, with a few lines of poetry, — I prided myself, rather, on the "lines" I could write for such occasions, — and so show that, though I had given her up to her new friend, I bore no malice.

That idea pleased me. I persuaded myself that I should be heaping coals of fire on her head, and I took great delight, as I have observed that people usually do, in the thought of making them as hot as possible.

“I am going to buy Grace a present,” I remarked to my mother, in an off-hand way, with, I rather think, some vague idea that she would admire my largeness of mind. She had asked me once or twice during the past few weeks what was the matter between Grace and me; and I had said, “Nothing, except that Grace had not time enough for both her cousin and myself.”

When I announced my intention to make Grace a present, it was received, I must confess, with a disappointing equanimity. “Oh,” my mother said, carelessly, and went on with her sewing.

Once resolved upon buying that gift, it filled all my thoughts. It should be something that Grace could not help liking, and it should be pretty, no matter how the other gifts fared.

There was one thing that I knew Grace had long wanted,—a silver locket with a picture of myself. Could I give her my picture, now that I had

chosen to take the ground that she no longer cared for me?

I might, at least, get the locket.

I went to the village jeweller's, and I found among his stock two little silver lockets. They were the same in price, — five dollars each. They were of bright, white coin-silver, for it said "pure coin" in little letters inside their covers. Each had a place for a picture. On the outside of one was a forget-me-not, beautifully engraved. On the other was a carnation pink, Grace's favorite flower.

I liked the sentiment of the forget-me-not; but after all, Grace was so fond of pinks. I could not make up my mind, and I went away to think of it overnight.

The next morning I hurried back, hardly certain yet which I wanted. I asked if I might see the two little lockets again.

"One was sold last night," the clerk answered, "but here is the other," and he took out of the showcase the locket with the carnation.

So the matter had been settled for me. I handed out my twenty-dollar gold-piece, — for, after all, this was the first Christmas present that I had purchased,

— received my change and the little silver locket, and went home.

It was Saturday, and there was no school. I busied myself with embroidery patterns, and tried to plan what I could make, and what I could buy with the rest of my money ; but all the time I was really trying to settle the question in my own mind whether I should have my daguerreotype—for it was in the old days of daguerreotypes — put into Grace's locket.

I said to myself, " Perhaps she does not love me enough, now, to want it." But in my heart I knew that she loved me as much as ever, and that it was only my wicked pride which hated to admit that I was wholly in the wrong.

I was sitting in the room where my mother was sewing — poor, patient mother, with so many weary stitches to take always — and my aunt was reading. Suddenly my aunt looked up.

" Here is something I want to read to you, sister, I think it so well said." And then she read : —

" ' There was an old custom in Egypt of carrying a dead body round on its way to burial, and stopping before the doors of all who had been its enemies, that there might be a reconciliation before the last long

parting. Would it not be well to do that earlier? What if by a common consent all human differences had to expire with each old year, and a new page begin with the new? Would we not be careful, having felt the soreness of estrangement, to keep the new year fair?' "

The words struck me with a strange force and meaning. What if I should wait too long before I let Grace know not only that I loved her, but that I believed in her love? Would any sacrifice of such a poor thing as my pride be too much to make to atone for all the sore pain I must have cost her?

You will think my simplest course would have been to go to her at once, and tell her all that I felt. But I have told you that I was an imaginative child. There was something in me that delighted in scenes and crises, — in doing things in a story-book kind of way. It would soon be Christmas Eve, and Grace would be expecting nothing from me. How charming it would be to go to her with the locket, and surprise her with that and my visit at the same time!

That afternoon I had my daguerreotype taken, and put into the locket. The man who took it gave, with

his soft brushes, a little rose to my cheeks, just a tint of blue to my eyes, and a little golden warmth to my hair.

I secretly thought it a pretty picture, and I don't think from that time till Christmas Eve there was one waking hour in which I did not plan afresh what I should say to Grace, and how she would look, and what a touching and beautiful scene it would be, altogether.

At school, however, I held myself more carefully aloof from my friend than ever. I was so desperately afraid that I should be led to anticipate the grand reconciliation I had planned. Grace looked sad, and I used to think, sometimes, paler than usual; but if I believed, as I did in my heart, that the sadness was on my account, I comforted myself by thinking how soon I should chase it all away.

Christmas fell that year on Thursday, and that whole week there was no school. Wednesday night, just at twilight, we had finished our afternoon meal, and I asked my mother if I might carry my present to Grace and stay there for a little while. She consented, and told me she would send for me at nine o'clock.

I took a good look at the locket before I put it into its little box lined with pink cotton-wool. I thought how delighted Grace would surely be with it ; and I was glad it was the carnation one, and not the forget-me-not, for I fancied it would please her better.

Shall I ever forget that clear yet tender winter twilight through which I walked the half mile between my house and Grace's ? The west still held the glow of the sunset. The sky was cloudless, and in the east the evening star hung tenderly, as if to watch what might befall on earth this night of nights.

I knocked at the door, when at last I reached the house. I never used to knock, but I had been such an infrequent visitor of late. Mary, Grace's half-sister, opened the door, and I saw that her face was all swollen as by long weeping.

"I am glad you have come, Carry," she said. "We were going to send for you. Grace wants you. She is very ill with pleurisy. She has been ill two days, but we never thought of danger until to-day."

"Danger !" I think that was the most awful moment of all my life. I *knew* then that she was

going away from me ; and at the same time I knew, better than I had ever known before, how dearly I loved her, how dearly she had always loved me.

“May I speak to her ?” I whispered.

“Yes, the doctor says it will not hurt her. You may go in now.”

I found my darling in her own room. Her mother was there, and her cousin Edith sat by the fire. Grace put out her hands.

“How do you do, Carry ? I’m glad you’ve come.”

The very same old words of our first meeting ; only now they were spoken plainly, but in a hoarse, strange voice, not like my Grace’s.

“May I see Carry quite alone ?” she asked, and the others went out.

I sank on my knees beside her, and it seemed to me my heart broke, then and there. She spoke faintly, and with difficulty, but she drew herself along and rested her head against mine.

“Don’t grieve so, Carry,” she said. “I always knew you loved me. Did you think I did n’t know ? But I could n’t be unkind to Edith.”

“No, and I was a wretch ; a wicked, wicked girl ;

but I did love you all the time. See, I got *this* for you three weeks ago," and I opened the little silver locket and laid it in her hand.

"O Carry, it was just what I wanted most," she said. "Your dear face! I will make them leave it on me, if I die, dear, and I shall not be so lonesome with your face on my heart. *I* had something, too, for you."

She drew out from under her pillow another little silver locket, the forget-me-not locket. So it was she who had bought it, even before I bought its mate. There was under its glass a long tress of her soft, shining black hair, and a hair chain was attached to it.

"The chain is my own hair, too, dear; I braided it for you, myself. It is very strong, and I thought you would like it. I did not know I was going to leave you when I made it; but it will make you think of me when I am gone."

She was so much calmer than I. I could scarcely speak at all.

"Are you" — I could not say the rest of the sentence I had begun.

"Yes, dear, I think so; and I dare not be sorry

when the Father in heaven says 'Come;' but I should have liked to be happy again, for a while, with you."

Her mother came back then, bringing the doctor. They sent me out of the room, and when, soon after, they came out together I heard the doctor say that she was sinking fast.

"Oh, let me stay with her this one night," I cried, out of the depths of my broken heart; "please, *please* let me!"

"Do let her, if you can," said Mary's gentle voice, and the doctor answered, —

"Yes, let her stay, if you like; nothing can do any harm now."

So I stayed through that long night, and we all watched round Grace's bed together. Sometimes she was in sharp pain, which it agonized us to witness. Then she would seem to sleep the heavy sleep of exhaustion. From time to time she spoke to one and another of us, some tender, thoughtful sentence. Once she drew Edith's hand and mine together, as we stood near her, and said, quite clearly, —

"You both loved *me*. For *my* sake, love each other."

And once she said, but that was when it was almost morning, —

“Will it not be a good day to be born into heaven, the day on which our Lord was born here?”

It was the stillest chamber. We all tried to be quiet, and to keep back all signs of our sorrow, for her dear sake; and we saw, or thought we saw, upon her face the light of some new dawn of glory.

Towards the end, her mind seemed to wander a little. She said over and over, in a dreamy kind of way, —

“Oh yes, I knew always — I never doubted.”

The window-shades were pulled high up, and I caught sight of a rosy flush above the eastern hills. Just then, as if in answer to some voice we did not hear, she cried out strongly, “*Yes! Yes!*”

And then she turned to us, as one who sets out upon a journey, and bade us, one after the other, good-by.

“Carry, last,” she said; and spoke to all the others, even to her mother. Then she turned to me, with the light upon her face by which I shall know her when I meet her among the angels, “Cahwy, Cahwy!”

It was the old childish name when she could not speak plainly, — the name by which she had adopted me when she and I were only four years old, — and as it crossed her lips a sudden ray of dawning struck them, for

“The morn of the nativity had just begun to break.”

With that dawning Grace was born into another world than ours. The lips which the first sunbeam kissed were already cold.

They buried her, as she had requested, with my Christmas gift upon her heart. My face went down with her into the silence below the grass and the snow.

I have never laid aside her last gift, the little silver locket with the forget-me-not on its cover. If there is any good in me at all, if I have striven ever so feebly to uproot from my heart the evil weeds of jealousy and injustice, God only knows how much of it I owe to this my talisman, my silent monitor.

Especially do I look at it every Christmas morning, and think of her on whose frozen beauty that Christmas morning of long ago looked in. And still,

though so many years have passed, do I miss her sorely.

Does she miss me also, in her far, blessed home, and bend to listen to the chant in which souls that aspire on earth and souls that rejoice in heaven alike may join, — “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men”?

HER MOTHER'S DAUGHTER.

SYL GRAHAM was an only child. Her name was Sylvia, but everybody called her Syl, except that sometimes, half playfully and half chidingly, her father called her Syllly. But that was a liberty no one else took, — and for which Mr. Graham himself was not unlikely to pay in extra indulgence.

Syl was seventeen, and she had never known any trouble in all her young, bright life. Her mother had died when she was two years old; and this, which might easily have been the greatest of misfortunes, — though Syl was too young to know it, — had been turned almost into a blessing by the devotion of her father's sister, Aunt Rachel, who came to take care of the little one then, and had never left her since.

Not the dead Mrs. Graham herself could have

been more motherly or more tender than Aunt Rachel; and the girl had grown up like a flower in a shaded nook, on which no rough wind had ever been allowed to breathe.

And a pretty flower she was; so her father thought when she ran into the hall to meet him, as he came in from business at the close of the short November day.

The last rays of daylight just bronzed her chestnut hair. Her face was delicately fair,—as the complexion that goes with such hair usually is,—colorless save in the lips, which seemed as much brighter than other lips as if they had added to their own color all that which was absent from the fair, colorless cheeks. The brown eyes were dancing with pleasant thoughts, the little, girlish figure was wonderfully graceful, and Papa Graham looked down at this fair, sweet maiden with a fond pride, which the sourest critic could hardly have had a heart to condemn.

“Are you cross?” she said laughingly, as she helped him off with his overcoat.

“Very,” he answered, with gravity.

“I mean are you worse than usual? Will you be in the best humor now or after dinner?”

“After dinner, decidedly, if Aunt Rachel’s coffee is good.”

Syl nodded her piquant little head. “I’ll wait, then.”

The dinner was good enough to have tempted a less hungry man than Mr. Graham, and the coffee was perfect. Papa’s dressing-gown and slippers were ready, upstairs; and when he had sat down in the great, soft easy-chair that awaited him, and his daughter had settled herself on a stool at his feet, I think it would have been hard to find a more contented-looking man in all New York.

“Now I’m very sure you are as good as such a bear can be,” said saucy Syl; “and now we’ll converse.”

To “converse” was Syl’s pet phrase for the course of request, reasoning, entreaty, by which Papa Graham was usually brought to accede to all her wishes, however extravagant. He rested his hand now on her shining chestnut braids, and thought how like she was to the young wife he

had loved so well, and lost so early. Then he said teasingly, —

“What is it, this time? A Paris doll, with a trunk and a bandbox; or a hand-organ?”

“For shame, papa! The doll was four years ago.”

“All the more reason it must be worn out. Then it's the hand-organ. But I must draw the line somewhere, — you can't have the monkey. If Punch and Judy would do, though?”

“Now, Father Lucius, you know I gave up the hand-organ two years ago, and took a piano for my little upstairs room instead; and you know I'm seventeen. Am I likely, at this age, to want monkeys, Punch and Judys, and things?”

“O, no! I forgot. Seventeen, — it must be a sewing-machine. You want to make all your endless bibs and tuckers more easily. Well, I'll consent.”

Syl blushed. It was a sore point between her and Aunt Rachel that she so seldom sewed for herself. Aunt Rachel had old-fashioned notions, and believed in girls that made their own pretty things.

"Now, papa, you are not good-humored at all. I had better have asked you before dinner. You don't even let me tell you what I want."

Papa sobered his face into a look of respectful attention, and waited silently. But now Syl was not quite ready to speak.

"Don't you think pomegranate is a pretty color, papa?"

"What is it like?"

"O, it's the deepest, richest, brightest, humanest red you ever saw."

"Why, I think it must be like your lips;" and he drew her to him, and kissed the bright young mouth with a lazy content.

"Perhaps it *is* like my lips; then, surely it will look well *with* them."

"Where does this blossom of beauty grow?"

"It grows at Stewart's. It has been woven into a lovely, soft-falling silk, at four dollars a yard. Twenty-five yards makes a gown, and eight yards of velvet makes the trimming and the sleeveless jacket, and the velvet is six dollars a yard. And then there is Madame Bodin, she



“‘You don’t even let me tell you what I want.’ Papa sobered his face into a look of respectful attention, and waited silently.”

charges like a horrid old Jew, — forty dollars just to look at a gown ; and then there are the linings and buttons and things. Have you kept account, papa, and added it all up in your head ? ”

“ I think it means about two hundred dollars. Is n't that what you call it, Syllly ? ”

“ Yes, if you please. It 'll be *worth* that, won't it, to have your daughter look like a love, when all the people come on New Year's Day ? ”

“ So that 's it, — that 's what this conspiracy against my peace and my pocket has for its object, — that Miss Syl Graham may sit at the receipt of callers on New Year's Day, in a robe like a red, red rose. O Syllly, Syllly ! ”

Syl pouted a little, the most becoming pout in the world.

“ Well, I 'm sure I thought you cared how I look. If you don't, never mind. My old black silk is still very neat and decent.”

“ September, October, November, — it 's nearly three months old, is n't it ? What a well-behaved gown it must be to have kept neat and decent so long ! And as to the other, I 'll consider,

and you can ask me again when I come home to-morrow."

Syl knew what Papa Graham's considers meant, and how they always ended. She had gained her point, and she danced off and sang to the piano some old Scotch airs that her father loved, because Syl's mother used to sing them; and Papa Graham listened dreamily to the music, while his thoughts went back twenty years, to the first winter when he brought his girl-bride home, only a year older, then, than Syl was now. He remembered how the firelight used to shine on her fair, upturned face, as she knelt beside him; how sweet her voice was; how pure and true and fond her innocent young heart. And now Syl was all he had left of her.

Should he lose Syl herself, soon? Would some bold wooer come and carry her away, and leave him with only Aunt Rachel's quiet figure and fading face beside him for the rest of his life?

Just then Syl might have asked him not in vain for any thing, even to the half of his kingdom.

Next morning Syl went into the sewing-room

A young girl just about her own age was there — altering, sewing, making all the foolish little fancies in which Syl's heart delighted, though her idle fingers never wrought at them. Out of pure kindness of heart Syl found her way into the sewing-room very often when Mary Gordon was there. She knew her presence carried pleasure with it, and often she used to take some story or poem and read to the young listener, with the always busy fingers, and the gentle, grateful face.

But to-day she found the girl's eyes very red as if with long weeping. If Syl was selfish it was only because she never came in contact with the pains and needs of others. She had "fed on the roses and lain among the lilies of life," — how was she to know the hurt of its stinging nettles? But she could not have been the lovesome, charming girl she was if she had had a nature hard and indifferent to the pains of others.

To see Mary Gordon's red eyes was enough. Instantly she drew the work out of the fingers that trembled so ; and then she set herself to draw the secret sorrow out of the poor, trembling heart.

It was the old story, so sadly common and yet so bitterly sad, of a mother wasting away and fading out of life, and a daughter struggling to take care of her, and breaking her heart because she could do so little.

"I'm used to all that," the girl said sadly, "and I don't let myself cry for what I can't help. But this morning I heard her say to herself, as I was getting every thing ready for her, 'O, the long, lonesome day!' She thought I did not hear her, for she never complains; but somehow it broke me down. I keep thinking of her, suffering and weary and all alone. But I can't help that, either; and I must learn to be contented in thinking that I do my best."

"But can't you stay at home with her and work there?" cried Syl, all eager sympathy and interest.

"No, I can't get work enough in that way. People want their altering and fixing done in their own houses, and plain sewing pays so poorly. Sometimes I've thought if I only had a machine, so I could get a great deal done, I might manage; but to hire one would eat up all my profits."

Syl thought a little silent while; and it was a pretty sight to see the fair young face settle into such deep earnestness.

“Well,” she said at length, “at least you shall stay at home with her to-morrow; for all those ruffles can be done just as well there as here, and you shall carry them home with you. And you’d better go early this afternoon; there’ll be enough work to last you, and I can’t bear to think of her waiting for you, and wanting you, so many long hours. We’ll give her a little surprise.”

Mary Gordon did not speak for a moment. I think she was getting her voice steady, for when she did begin it trembled.

“I *can’t* thank you, Miss Syl, — it’s no use to try; but the strange part is how you understand it all, when you’ve no mother yourself.”

“Ah, but you see I have papa and auntie, and I just know.”

That day, after Syl and Aunt Rachel had lunched together, Syl said, in a coaxing little way she had, —

“Aunt Rachel, we never want to see the other half of that cold chicken again, do we?”

“Why, Syl — we” —

“Why, auntie, no — we never want to-morrow’s lunch furnished coldly forth by this sad relic. And there’s a tumbler of jelly we don’t want, either — and those rolls, and, — let me see, can sick people eat cake?”

“Why, Syl Graham, what are you talking about! Who’s sick?”

Syl grew sober.

“I’m thinking about poor Mary Gordon’s mother, auntie. She’s sick, and dying by inches; and Mary has to leave her all alone; and I’ve told her she shall stay at home to-morrow and make my ruffles, and we’ll pay her just the same as if she came here. And don’t you see that we must give her her dinner to take home, since she can’t come here after it?”

Aunt Rachel never said a word, but she got up and kissed Syl on each cheek. Then she brought a basket, and into it went the cold chicken and a cold tongue and jelly and buttered rolls and fruit,

till even Syl was satisfied ; and she took the heavy basket and danced away with it to the sewing-room, with a bright light in her dear brown eyes.

“I think you'd best go now,” she said. “I can't get your mother, waiting there alone, out of my mind, and it's spoiling my afternoon, don't you see? And because you must n't come here to dine to-morrow, you must carry your dinner home with you ; and Aunt Rachel put some fruit and some jelly in the basket that maybe your mother will like.”

That night, when Mr. Lucius Graham let himself into the hall with his latch-key, his daughter heard him and went to meet him, as usual. But she was very silent, and he missed his teasing, saucy, provoking Syl.

“Why, daughter, are you in a dream?” he asked once during dinner ; but she only laughed and shook her head. She held her peace until she had him at her mercy, in the great easy-chair, and she was on the stool beside him, as her wont was. Then, suddenly, her question came.

“Papa, do you think a pomegranate silk without velvet would be very bad?”

He was inclined to tease her, and began with “Hideous!” but then he saw that her lips were fairly trembling, and her face full of eagerness, and forbore.

“How did you know you were to have the silk at all? But you know your power over me. Here is your needful;” and he put into her hands ten bright, new twenty-dollar bills.

“O, thank you! and *do* you think it would be bad without the velvet?”

“Sylly, no; but why should n’t you have the velvet if you want it?”

And then came the whole story of poor Mary Gordon, and—in such an eager tone,—

“Don’t you see, with the money the velvet would cost, and a little more, I could get her the sewing-machine; and Madame Bodin would n’t ask so much to make the dress if it is plainer?”

Mr. Graham was a rich man, and his first thought was to give her the money for the machine, and let her have her pretty dress, as she had

fancied it, first. But a second thought restrained him. She was just beginning to learn the joy and beauty of self-sacrifice. Should he interfere? He kissed her with a half-solemn tenderness, and answered her, —

“You shall do precisely as you please, my dear. The two hundred dollars is yours. Use it *just* as you like. I shall never inquire into its fate again.”

And then she went away — and was it her voice or that of some blessed spirit that came to him, a moment after, from the shadowy corner where the piano stood, singing an old middle-age hymn, about the city —

“Where all the glad life-music,
Now heard no longer here,
Shall come again to greet us,
As we are drawing near.”

The next day, who so busy and happy as Syl — dragging Aunt Rachel from one warehouse to another — it was in the days when sewing-machines were costly — till she was quite sure she had found just the right machine; and then or-

dering it sent, at three o'clock, no earlier, no later, to Miss Gordon, No. 2 Crescent Place.

At a quarter before three Syl went there herself. The pleasure of witnessing Mary Gordon's surprise was the thing she had promised herself, in lieu of velvet on her gown. She found the poor room neat and clean, and by no means without traces of comfort and refinement; and Mrs. Gordon was a sweet and gentle woman, such as Mary's mother must have been to be in keeping with Mary. She chatted with them for a few minutes, noticing the invalid's short breath and frequent cough, and Mary's careful tenderness over her.

"It's too bad Mary can't be at home all the time," said Syl.

"Yes; but then to have her to-day is such a blessing. If you knew how we had enjoyed our day together, and our feast together, I know you would feel paid for any inconvenience it cost you."

Just then an express wagon rumbled up to the door and the bell rang loudly. Mary opened it at once, for their room was on the ground floor

“A sewing-machine for Miss Gordon,” said a somewhat gruff voice.

“No, that cannot be. There is some mistake,” said Mary’s gentle tones. And then Syl sprang forward, in a flutter of excitement, which would have been pretty to see had there been anybody there to notice it.

“I’m sure it’s all right. Bring it in, please; and Mary, you will tell them where to put it, in the best light.”

And in five minutes or less it was all in its place, and Mary was looking, with eyes full of wonder, and something else beside wonder, at Syl Graham.

“It’s nothing,” said Syl hurriedly; “it’s only my New Year’s present to you, a little in advance of time.”

She had thought she should enjoy Mary’s surprise; but this was something she had not looked for,—this utter breaking down, these great wild sobs, as if the girl’s heart would break. And when she could speak at length, she cried with a sort of passion, —

“ O Miss Syl, I do believe you have saved my mother’s life ! She will get better — she must — now that I can stay here all the time and take care of her.”

Syl was glad to get out into the street. She felt something in her own throat choking her. Just a few steps off she met Dr. Meade, — her own doctor, as it chanced, — and it struck her that it would be a good thing if he would go in to see Mrs. Gordon. So she asked him.

“ I’m going there,” he said. “ I try to see her once every week.”

“ And will she live — can she ? ”

The doctor answered, with half a sigh, —

“ I’m afraid not. She needs more constant care, and more nourishing food and other things. I wish I could help her more, but I can only give my services, and I see so many such cases.”

“ But she would take things from you, and not be hurt ? ”

“ I should *make* her if I had a full purse to go to.”

“ Well, then, here are forty dollars for her ; and

you are to get her what she needs, and never let her know where it came from — will you ? ”

“ Yes, I will,” he answered earnestly. And then, after a moment, he said, — “ Syl Graham, you are your mother's daughter. I can say no better thing of you, — she was a good woman.”

Syl had a hundred dollars left ; but that would n't compass the pomegranate silk, and Syl had concluded now she did not want it. She had had a glimpse of something better ; and that hundred dollars would make many a sad heart glad before spring.

On New Year's Day, Papa Graham was off all day making calls ; and the gas was already lighted when he went into his own house, and into his own drawing-room. He saw a girl there with bands of bright chestnut hair about her graceful young head ; with shining eyes, and lips as bright as the vivid crimson roses in her braided hair, and in the bosom of her black silk gown. He looked at her with a fond pride and a fonder love ; and then he bent to kiss her, — for the room was empty of guests just then. As he lifted his head

and met Aunt Rachel's eyes, it happened that he said about the same words Dr. Meade had used before, —

“ She is her mother's daughter ; I can say of her no better thing.”

HOW RUTH CAME HOME.

IT was the old story over again, — the duck had hatched a swan, and thought it a very ugly bird. Mrs. John Frost was thoroughly discontented with her youngest girl. Girls *were* rather an old story when Ruth was born. Delia and Jeannette had already preceded her, — Delia by four years, and Jeannette by two.

Ruth should have been a boy. Her mother, indeed, almost resented the intrusion of a third girl. They say mother-love is a universal instinct; and no doubt it existed somewhere deep down in Mrs. John Frost's heart, even for this undesired girl.

Papa Frost made Ruth welcome from the first. He had never been allowed to have much to do with the two older girls. But little Ruth he might pet and fondle to his heart's content.

It was he who gave her her name, in memory of his mother, who had gone long ago to sleep on the

sunny south side of the village churchyard. When she grew old enough to toddle about, it was to his hand that she clung. When her school-days came, it was to him, not to her mother, that she told all her little pleasures and perplexities. While she had him, she scarcely realized that her lot was more lonely than that of her two older sisters, who were always playing together.

When she grew older still, into a shy little girl of twelve, it was to her father that she went with her first great secret. The soul of an artist was in little Ruth Frost; and she made pictures of all sorts of things with such simple materials as she could command. At last she showed them to her father; and he, with the keen artistic sense he had, which had never found expression, perceived, under their crudeness, the something that made him believe the child had genius.

He kept her secret faithfully, but he bought her pencils and colors and cardboard; and he was as excited over every fresh attempt of hers as she was herself.

By this time Delia was sixteen, and very "capable," as they say in New England; and Jeannette

was fourteen, and she, too, was a girl after her mother's own heart, and "could turn her hand to anything." There was not much left for Ruth to do, except to dream, and to try to shadow forth her dreams in her sketches. She never could have kept these sketches secret save for her father; but the mystery was as dear to him as to her.

He liked to think there was this shared and sacred confidence between him and his youngest and favorite girl.

She grew to be fourteen before her first great trouble came to her. Then one morning she saw her father in the garden before breakfast, and they made plans together for a little walk and a new sketch, as gayly as two children. After this they went in to breakfast. When the meal was half over, a strange look came across John Frost's face. He put out his hands in a vague, uncertain way, and said, "Father's little daughter!" as if he were unconscious what he was saying.

Those were his very last words.

Ruth sprang to his side first, and then the others. He was taken to bed; physicians were summoned; all that man could do was done, and done in vain.

Now and then, when Ruth was left alone with him for a moment, she would clasp and kiss him and cry to him, with all the passion of her loving heart ; but no sound penetrated those closed ears.

He lay there, breathing heavily, for two hours. Then the breath grew shorter and fainter, and ceased at last ; he had gone out upon the tide, to another shore, where they need not the sun by day or the moon by night.

The grief of all the others was more noisy than that of Ruth. But when he was taken away and buried out of her sight, she felt as if her heart had been left behind her in his grave. She went silently and dreamily about the house. She could not touch, for a long time, her brushes or her pencils. All the implements of her art were connected so closely with him.

But at last her longing to work came back to her. It seemed to her that in it she must find her only consolation. And now her petty vexations began. Without her father's aid she could no longer keep her occupation secret ; and it vexed her mother sorely to find in a daughter of her own such alien tastes.

She set her hard tasks, at which Ruth labored

faithfully, full of a desperate impatience to get through them, and go back to the work that was her life. But somehow she never gave satisfaction. If she made bread, it did not "rise" as Delia's and Jeannette's did; if she sewed a seam, it was sure not to be quite straight; if she dusted a room, there would be some unlucky speck of dust left somewhere.

At last, the day she was sixteen, her mother summoned her for a serious talk. Ruth had been crying. For almost two years now her father had been asleep under his coverlet of summer grass or winter snow, and Ruth could not remember one really tender word that had been spoken to her in all that time. Was it her own fault? she wondered. She knew that she was not companionable to the rest. The little things of every day that interested them so much had no interest for her. She was absent-minded, forever seeing something in her mind that no one else saw.

"Mother says my wits are always wool-gathering," she said to herself, "and I suppose it *is* trying. Perhaps if I think more about what is going on, and how I can help along, they will grow fonder of me after a while. I can't expect anybody to care, as *he* cared,

for what *I* want; but, perhaps, if *I* care for what *they* want, things will go better."

To her, in this softened mood, came Delia, and said that her mother wanted her in the sitting-room. The moment she appeared there, her eyes, red with weeping, gave offence to her mother.

It would be unjust to forget that Mrs. Frost had her own grievance. To her it seemed a positive trouble to have a daughter whom she could no more understand than she could have guessed the Sphinx's riddle, — a silent conundrum, eating her bread, and going in and out of her house, but living some other life of her own all the time. She looked at pale little Ruth with her red eyes, and said, in a tone of voice which was not free from bitterness, —

"You are sixteen years old now, and I think it's time that you should turn over a new leaf. You have never done anything useful since you were born, and I think you should begin now. Delia and Jeannette are both good housekeepers, and Delia is going to teach school this winter. You do nothing but idle your time away over a parcel of paints and brushes, and I'm going to put a stop to it."

"Are we poor, mother?" Ruth asked, with a cour-

age that astonished herself as much as it did her mother.

"No, we are not poor ; but that is no sign why you should be lazy."

"Have *I* anything of my own ?"

"Not while I live. The property was more of it mine than your father's, and he willed it all to me. Why do you ask ?"

"Because if I had anything, I should wish to use it to go away and study art."

"Study fiddle-sticks !" Mrs. Frost cried, angrily. "Go and bring me your paints and brushes, every one."

Silently Ruth obeyed. She thought they were to be locked away from her ; but she put them into her mother's hand, with a submission so unprotesting that somehow it angered her mother still more.

It was a chilly morning early in September, and a light, bright fire was burning on the hearth. Mrs. Frost turned towards it, with the paints and brushes. If Ruth had entreated, even then, no doubt she might have saved her treasures ; for her mother was narrow and prejudiced, rather than unkind or hard-hearted. But a spirit came into Ruth which she did not her-

self recognize. Her lips grew white and rigid, but she did not open them. She looked steadfastly at her mother. One by one Mrs. Frost laid those things which were her daughter's treasures upon the fire. The flames welcomed them eagerly, and glowed and danced around them, and in a moment they were gone.

Then the mother, half-frightened at what she had allowed herself to do, and the daughter, a little whiter and quieter than usual, stood and looked at each other. Ruth was the first to speak. It seemed as if in the last quarter of an hour she had suddenly grown up.

"Mother," she said, "I am not wanted here. Could you not help me to go away to an art-school, and prepare to be a teacher, and take care of myself?"

Her quiet manner enraged Mrs. Frost as much as her question did. Mrs. Frost was a good manager, a good housekeeper; but she had not learned to control her own spirit. Anger burned hot within her.

"You can go at any time you please," she said. "I'll give you fifty dollars to start with; and no doubt you will be able to get a living by your 'art,' I think you called it."

"Thank you ; I will take it and do the best I can for myself in the world."

Mrs. Frost looked after her in a kind of dumb surprise, not unmingled with alarm. She was not much troubled, however. As soon as the money was spent, she said to herself, Ruth would be back, glad enough to get home. And *she* should n't grudge the fifty dollars — not she — to teach Ruth a good lesson.

Ruth was glad that she had not been compelled to give her sketches to be burned. She could take them with her, and she had high hopes from them,— the hopes of an untried, inexperienced heart.

She prepared, with what speed she might, for her new life. When she had put all that she wished to take away into her trunk, she went downstairs and out of doors. Her feet had trodden many a time the path she took, for it led to her father's grave. When she got there, the churchyard was silent as the dead who slept in it. No soul was in sight, — not even a bird twittered. Ruth knelt down, and put her arms round the white stone on which her father's name was graven.

"*You* loved me !" she cried, "you only, in all the world ; and now you are gone. Do you *know* what I

say? Do you *know* how I cry, and there is no one to be sorry for me?"

And it seemed to her that from out the low grave she heard a voice echo softly the last words her father ever spoke,—

"Father's little daughter!"

When she went home again she was very calm. It was almost time for the train by which she meant to go to New York. She asked if the man might take herself and her trunk to the station. Then her mother gave her the fifty dollars, and, with a sort of eleventh-hour relenting, money enough besides to pay her passage to New York. She said good-by to Delia and Jeannette with no special emotion; then, suddenly, she turned to her mother. I think those two had never been so near each other in all Ruth's life as now, when they were parting.

"Kiss me, mother," Ruth cried eagerly. "My father loved us both."

And that kiss of parting was the warmest kiss the girl had ever known from her mother's lips.

"Of course you'll go to the Henleys; they are 119 West 11th Street; don't forget," Mrs. Frost called after her, as she was getting into the wagon.

The Henleys were old neighbors, who had moved, a few years before, to New York. Ruth doubted whether she should go there. She had plans of her own, impractical plans, but they looked reasonable to her. She would sell her sketches and live on the proceeds, and in her own success she had all the faith of untried youth.

She got to New York just at nightfall, and drove to the St. Nicholas Hotel. It was a lonesome night. She had chosen that hotel because she had been there once before with her father; but the memory of that old holiday did not make the present solitude the easier to bear.

Not until Ruth was fairly gone did Mrs. Frost realize the madness of letting this girl of sixteen go out alone into the world.

Before she went to bed, she wrote to Mrs. Henley, commending her daughter to her care. She slept little; and she would have slept yet less, had she herself had experience enough of the world to understand half the dangers Ruth was confronting. There was, indeed, but one hope for the helpless girl, to whom the great city might well have been more dangerous than a den of wild beasts. There was the

word of promise that God would be a father to the fatherless.

The next morning Ruth arose, bright and early. As soon as the shops seemed to be open, she walked out on Broadway. She had taken with her the best of her sketches; these she hoped to sell, and she walked on till she came to a well-known picture-store. It was too early an hour for customers. When she went in, the clerks were busy arranging the exhibition-room, and the proprietor of the shop seemed to be concluding a bargain with a lady who had brought some pictures to sell, — pictures so beautiful that, as Ruth saw them spread out, her heart sank within her. What would her poor little sketches look like, after these? Seeing her air of hesitation, the proprietor asked, courteously, how he could serve her.

“I, too, brought some sketches which I wanted to sell; but I see now that it will be of no use. After these, you will not look at mine.”

“Let me see them, at least,” said the dealer, pleasantly; and the lady turned, too, with much interest, touched by the admiration of her own work yet more evident in Ruth’s face than in her words. With her cheeks flushing, and her heart beating fast,

timid Ruth spread out her humble sketches. There was an utter absence of technical knowledge. She had not learned even the grammar of art, but the soul of art was there. She was like a real poet, who could not spell,—who did not know of the marriage ceremony between verbs and substantives, and yet whose fancy had scaled the heavens.

The dealer and Mrs. Osborne—for the lady was Margaret Osborne, the well-known artist—looked at each other in surprise.

There were low fields, over which the mists of morning crept, beneath skies where a red dawn began to break. There were desolate trees, whose boughs a long-prevailing wind had bent, and bits of water, sad in the sad moonlight. There were flowers, taken as they grew, with background of bits of rock and moss, and ferns that almost trembled as you looked at them.

“My child, you *know* nothing, but you *feel* everything!” Mrs. Osborne cried, impulsively.

The tears sprang to Ruth’s eyes. Such praise from such a source made her feel as if already she had been crowned with immortal bay. She looked the thanks she dared not trust herself to speak.

Then she said, timidly, to the dealer, "*Will* they sell?"

"I dare not promise that," he answered, kindly, "but I will keep them and show them to some people who may be interested. Some one may possibly buy these, now, for the sake of the great promise there is in them."

"Thank you. Then shall I call again in a few days?"

"If you please."

There was nothing more for Ruth but to go away.

In a few days she called again at the picture-store, and chanced to meet there the same lady. And evidently the lady remembered her, for she came forward and put out a cordial hand.

"I am Margaret Osborne," she said, "and I like the spirit of your work, and want to be your friend. May I?"

The sudden tears rushed into Ruth's eyes, — the swift red to her pale cheeks.

"O Mrs. Osborne," she cried, "*will* you? I am only Ruth Frost, from Ryefield; and I have come here all alone to try and make my way by my art,

and it does look so hard. Will you tell me what to do?"

"Indeed I will. Your sketches are sold already, Mr. Strauss tells me; and now you have only to go to work and acquire the technical skill which will make your execution as good as your ideas. Did you mean that you were quite alone in this great city, — a child like you? I will walk with you toward your place, and you shall tell me how this happens."

And so, as they walked, the story was told. All that had been harsh in Mrs. Frost got itself softened down in the telling; yet, somehow, Mrs. Osborne saw just how unwelcomed and uncongenial the girl's life had been in that home, and understood the mood of desperation in which Ruth had come out into the world, — a lamb, as she said to herself, among wolves. Margaret Osborne's sympathies were strong, and her impulses were quick and ardent. "I sometimes have art pupils," she said, as Ruth paused. "Perhaps you would like to come and study with me?"

"With you?"

"Yes. I am alone. There is a little room off my

own which you can have ; and you can work in my studio. I know you as well through those pictures of yours as if I had been your neighbor all my life. I can teach you all you need at present. I do not take many pupils, but I am willing to try you. Will you come ? ”

“ WILL I ? ” Ruth’s looks said the rest, for something seemed to choke her just then. If exiled Mother Eve had been invited back into the Garden of Eden, she might have felt something as this girl did, who seemed to herself to have been invited into paradise.

The next day, Mrs. Frost received a letter from Mrs. Henley, saying that she had neither seen nor heard anything from the missing Ruth, — a letter which Mrs. Frost thought she could *not* have borne, had not the same post brought one from Ruth. This last was a little letter, and it only said, —

“ MY DEAR MOTHER, — I have been wrong, I know, in not trying more to please you ; but I do think I am in my right place now. I am studying with a lady whom you would approve ; and I promise you faithfully, if I get into any trouble or difficulty, you shall know at once. You *do* know,

mother, that you can trust my word. If all goes well with me, you will not hear from me again until I have succeeded ; but be sure that I will never do one thing which would grieve my father, if the dead can know about the living. I love you and my home more than ever, now that I am far away.

“YOUR DAUGHTER RUTH.”

This letter somewhat eased the anxiety of Mrs. Frost's heart, in which, at last, the long-silent instinct of motherhood had asserted itself even towards this her youngest girl.

She had still half a hope that when the fifty dollars were spent, Ruth would return ; but, deeper down still, was a yet stronger, more unselfish hope, that the child would succeed in her own way.

In becoming an inmate of Mrs. Osborne's house, it seemed to Ruth that she had for the first time really begun to live, since for the first time she was surrounded by the atmosphere of art. The winter days were all too short for her work ; and the long evenings not long enough for the reading and conversation and music of which they were full. She thought of her mother, whose eyes had been sealed from beholding all this glory, with a half-remorseful

pity, which Mrs. Frost could never have understood, and with a tenderness as unfostered and pathetic as a flower which grows alone upon a grave.

In the warmth-giving sunshine of this new, bright life her powers expanded, and Mrs. Osborne used to say, half seriously, that she was raising up her own rival.

The next spring, Delia Frost was married. Her bridal journey took her to New York, and among other places where it was "the thing" to go, she went to the Academy exhibition of pictures. There was one which struck her greatly, for it was of a familiar scene,—their own old homestead,—the well-known house, with its sheltering trees; the little stream at the right, with the willows weeping over it; some old-fashioned flowers beside the rustic well.

"It is home to the life, George," she said to her husband. "Some artist must have sketched it in passing through Ryefield."

Of course "George" agreed with her, and they wandered on through the gallery. On their way out, they stopped again before the old homestead, and Delia declared it made her homesick to look at it

The next week, they were sitting in the parlor at home, and, among other things they had seen, Delia described this picture. Mrs. Frost sat for a few moments in silence; then she said, quietly, —

“Delia, did you happen to think that might be Ruth’s picture?”

“Oh no, mother, that wouldn’t be possible. She has only been gone since September. She couldn’t have got a picture into the Academy, — that child!”

Mrs. Frost said no more; but the next morning she came into the room where her daughters were sitting.

“I have packed my trunk,” she said, “and I am going to New York this afternoon. Mrs. Henley has often asked me to make her a visit, and I have concluded to go, now.”

It was not the family habit to make comments on the mother’s movements. She was a strong-willed woman, and accustomed to take her own way. But after she had gone, Delia said to Jeannette, —

“You may depend upon it, mother thinks that picture was Ruth’s, and she has gone to find out.”

Mrs. Frost meantime went on her uneventful journey. She passed that night at the Henleys’, and

the next morning she made her way to the Academy of Design.

She was not long in finding the picture of which she was in search. It was signed "Ray," and the catalogue gave her no further light on the subject; but she felt sure, in the depths of her heart, that this picture was painted from no hurried sketch by a passing artist, but from the faithful memory of one who clung lovingly to each simple detail, and omitted nothing.

She had too much shrewdness and perseverance to be baffled by an unresponsive catalogue; and she asked the person who sold tickets at the door who it was that decided what pictures should be accepted for the exhibition. "The Hanging Committee," she was told.

"And is any one of them here now?" she inquired.

A gentleman was pointed out to her, and she at once approached him with the straightforwardness which was one of her strong characteristics.

"I want to buy that picture, 'No. 334,'" she said. "Can you tell me where I can find the artist?"

"Fortunately, I can. It was painted by Miss

Ruth Frost. She is a pupil of Mrs. Osborne's, and lives with her at No. 10 West 42d Street."

A week after that, Jeannette, who was house-keeper in her mother's absence, received a letter, which said, only, —

"I shall return home to-morrow night, bringing two guests with me. I have purchased the picture of which Delia spoke.

"YOUR AFFECTIONATE MOTHER."

Two guests! Jeannette was full of excitement and curiosity; but she did not allow excitement to interfere with housekeeping. She made bread and cake, she arranged the spare rooms she gathered flowers to adorn the house; and at last, when there was nothing more to be done, she waited, and that was hardest of all. She had sent a wagon to meet the five-o'clock train, and at length it returned well laden. First of all, out stepped her mother, resolute and firm of foot.

"Jeannette," the mother said, as tranquil and self-possessed as ever, "here are Mrs. Osborne and my daughter Ruth, who have come to pass the month of June with us."

That night, leaving Mrs. Osborne to make friends with Jeannette, Ruth stole out to tread once more the well-worn path that led to her father's grave. She heard other footfalls behind her as she neared the churchyard; and looking round she saw her mother's face, pale in the moonlight, and strangely softened.

"May I come too, Ruth?" she asked, and there was a humility in her voice that no one had ever heard in it before. "May I come? I did not understand you as your father did. May be I did not altogether understand him, either, — but I loved him, Ruth; and I loved you too, even when I seemed the hardest."

Ruth did not speak. It seemed to her no words would fitly express the great passion of love and pity that swelled her heart. She only put out her hand, and her mother held it fast; and so they went on together, under the westering moon, to kneel at last, they two, beside a grave.

MARGARET'S NECKLACE.

PRETTY Margaret Ashurst stood before the counter of Golding & Smith, — the jewellers who brought, and took much pride in bringing, to quiet Paysonville all the elegant novelties of the city trade. Margaret was sixteen, blonde, beautiful, and Judge Ashurst's only daughter, — this latter not the least of her claims to distinction, for Judge Ashurst was a man whom not alone his town, county, State, but the whole country knew. His great, gray stone house stood at the head of the village, like a city set upon a hill; — prominent among its humbler neighbors as the judge himself was among his townsmen.

Margaret, in her violet velveteen suit, with the violet hat just crowning her golden hair, and the dainty violet gloves, so delicate that they did not

conceal the symmetry of her perfect hands, was a pretty sight, as she turned over the trays full of glittering ornaments which the beguiling shopman placed before her. In the little silver portemonnaie which swung from her wrist, she had a crisp, new, fifty-dollar bank note, which her Uncle John had sent her the week before.

"To buy yourself a keepsake with, to give away, to spend precisely as you want to, so that it gives you pleasure," his letter had said; and as to buy a keepsake was his first suggestion, and as doing this, she felt, was very sure to give her pleasure, she had come out on that errand bent.

Rings — they were beautiful, but she had so many now — Christmas gifts, birthday gifts, and the like — spoiled child of fortune as she was, that none of them seemed to tempt her. Brooches — yes, but she had as pretty ones at home; bracelets — if she had a dozen, she should always wear one pair, somebody's gift who had been dear and now was dead. She turned from all the fine show listlessly, beginning to feel the spending of her fifty-dollar note rather an anx-

iety. At precisely this stage of the affair Mr. Golding, who had been watching from a little distance the march of events, himself came forward, his clerks making way for him.

"Perhaps you have not seen this new style of necklace, Miss Ashurst? In New York, necklaces and medallions have superseded brooches almost entirely. These spiral ones of fine gold are remarkably flexible and handsome."

Miss Ashurst took up the glittering bauble he offered her, and held it for a moment in her hand. It *was* beautiful. If she should win Professor Frankenstein's medallion —

"How much is it?" she asked.

"Fifty dollars."

Just the sum Uncle John had sent. It seemed as if it had been meant for her to have this very thing. Pretty Margaret was rather apt to think that things which suited her pleasure were "meant." She drew out her bank note.

"I think I will take it," she said, handing the money to Mr. Golding.

"But you want a medallion for it, Miss Ashurst. Let me show you some."

"I can make a locket, which I have, answer for just now," Margaret responded, smiling. "I must wait till Christmas for anything else"—and then she added, in a whisper, to herself—"unless I win."

She carried home her beautiful glittering ornament, and laid the velvet case containing it in her mother's lap. Mrs. Ashurst opened it, looked at the jewel for a moment, and then said, with just a touch of regret in her tone :

"It *is* very beautiful. So you thought *this* would give you the most pleasure?"

"On the whole, yes, mamma. I had so many ornaments of other kinds ; and then if I win the medallion this will just suit, you know."

"Do you think you shall?"

"It will depend chiefly on the examination. I shall not fail, either in my lessons or conduct,—neither will Rachel Gorham. You know it's wholly between us two, now. All the rest have

fallen off, and are miles behind. She and I are neck and neck."

Mrs. Ashurst was silent for a time. She was a sweet, thoughtful-looking lady, with a pure, tender, motherly face. If Margaret Ashurst should ever become a noble woman she would owe it to this other noble woman, her mother, — this woman who had borne the trial of prosperity, ten times more searching to the soul than that of adversity, and had come out from it unscathed.

"You believe that I love you, my Margaret?" she asked, at length.

"Believe, mamma! I should think I *knew* that, if I know my own existence."

"Then you will not think it want of love if I tell you that I had rather Rachel Gorham won this medallion than you?"

Margaret's bright, fair face clouded.

"Rather! O mamma, I did think you were interested in my success."

"And can you think for one moment that I am not, my darling? I want you to do your very best. I would like you and Rachel to come out

so nearly alike that there should be almost a doubt to which to award the prize. Still I should like there to be some little point of superiority by means of which Rachel should win it."

The shadow on Margaret's face grew tender.

"Because she has so little, and I so much?" she asked, with slow, sweet seriousness. "That is so like you, mamma!"

"Yes, for that, but not for that alone. Rachel is to teach for her livelihood. She wants to get a situation next year, and it would help her incalculably if she took the first prize in such a school as Professor Frankenstein's. If I know him at all, I know that for precisely these reasons he would rather give her the prize than you; so at least she is sure of justice."

"Yes, I think the professor *would* rather she should have it. But he is so odd. It's curious enough he should give that lovely cameo medalion for a prize at all, — one of the relics of his foreign travels."

"Not curious, because he is a thoroughly unselfish man; and when he found the Paysonville

school in such a listless, dead-and-alive state that it was necessary to make them work for something they could see with their eyes and touch with their fingers, he chose it should be something beautiful in itself, something which would cultivate their tastes while they were striving for it. I want *you* should work for it, Maggie, but I hope Rachel Gorham will win it."

"And *I* hope you'll see it hanging from my new chain," Margaret answered, laughingly; for the understanding between these two, mother and daughter, was perfect,—they always told each other the unvarnished truth.

Three weeks went on, and it was the end of May. Three weeks more, and examination-day would have come. Margaret's necklace had lain all this time securely in her upper drawer. Its first appearance must be in honor of the medallion; if she won the medallion, if—

Rachel Gorham's mother was a widow, and the best dressmaker in Paysonville. Already she had sent home Miss Ashurst's simple, yet beautiful, costume for the examination,—a soft, full, fleecy

muslin dress, daintily made, with a wide blue sash and a blue knot to fasten the delicate lace at the throat. Margaret had looked at it with approbation before she went to school that morning. At recess she had been sitting at her desk correcting an exercise, and she could not help hearing a conversation between Rachel Gorham and her intimate friend.

"Shall you have a new dress for examination, Rachel?" was the first question which caught her ear. Then she heard a little unconscious sigh, and then Rachel's answer :

"No. If I teach next year, it will be all mother can possibly afford to fit me up suitably to go away from home ; and I have strong hopes of getting a situation, for Professor Frankenstein has promised to interest himself for me. We are all to wear white, you know, and I must make the cambric I wore last year answer. Mother will let some tucks down, and do it up."

"That skimped, old-fashioned thing, with not even an overskirt?" her companion exclaimed.

discontentedly. "Why, Rachie, I wanted to be proud of you."

"Well, it must be of me, then, and not of my gown," Rachel answered bravely; and Margaret, having finished her exercise, went away.

All the way home, this conversation which she had heard haunted her. She had a generous nature, as her mother's child could hardly have failed to have. She really wished that Rachel, who would certainly have a very important part to play in the examination, could be well and suitably dressed. If Rachel only had an Uncle John, who would send her fifty dollars "to spend precisely as she wanted to, so that it gave her pleasure"! Then came a question. Had she spent *her* fifty dollars so that it really gave her the most pleasure? And out of the question grew a purpose.

It was a half-holiday, and directly after dinner Margaret went out. She did not say where she was going; but Mrs. Ashurst was not much in the habit of asking questions of this girl, who had never kept a secret from her in her life.

Holding a little parcel in her hands, she went straight to the store of Golding & Smith, and asked to see Mr. Golding in his counting-room for a moment.

"I wish very much to dispose of this," she said, handing to him the case which contained her gold necklace.

"Don't you like it?" he asked, in surprise. "We will exchange it for anything we have in the store, with pleasure."

"An exchange would not serve me, sir. There is something else which I wish to do with this money. I have never worn the necklace, but, of course, my having it at home may have lost you the opportunity of selling it. If you would take it back, and keep enough of the price to make yourself good, it would be a real favor."

Mr. Golding considered for a moment. Trade was trade, and he liked to make good bargains, but it would not be a bad plan to oblige Judge Ashurst's daughter. He went to the desk, and counted out five ten-dollar bills.

"If you have had our necklace to keep in your

drawer, we have had your money to keep in our till," he said, good-humoredly. "We will call that quits, and here is the price you paid me, in full."

Miss Ashurst thanked him warmly. An hour afterwards she was at home, sitting beside her mother, with a bundle of goodly size in her lap. Before she opened it, she repeated the conversation she had heard at school.

"I did think it was too bad, mamma, that she should wear her old skimped cambric. It seemed to me she could hardly have her wits about her if she had to appear shabby and ill-dressed among the rest. If I should come out ahead, and I hope I shall, you know, I wanted it should be by pure force of merit, and not because my rival was too embarrassed to do herself justice. I did so wish she had an Uncle John!"

"And you thought the next best thing would be for you to have one?" Mrs. Ashurst said, smiling.

"How did you know, mamma? But then, you are always a witch. Yes, I did think so; and

Mr. Golding took my necklace back, and — look here, mamma !”

She unfolded her bundle. There were yards of fleecy muslin — enough for a dress like her own — other muslin enough for an underskirt, soft lace for neck and wrists, and a sash of clear, handsome green.

“There, mamma, I spent thirty-five dollars, and I think I did pretty well with it. Now I want to send Rachel the other fifteen. She will need boots, and gloves, and all the little things. See what I’ve written to go with it. I want you to copy it in your very biggest hand, darling mamma, for Rachel knows mine ; and I think the only way to make her take it would be for her not to be able to guess where it came from.”

Mrs. Ashurst took the slip of paper, and read on it these words :

“The accompanying muslin, etc., is for the examination toilette of Miss Rachel Gorham, from one who admires her scholarship, and wishes her success. The enclosed fifteen dollars are for the

additional trifles which the writer did not know enough of feminine necessities to select."

"That *doesn't* sound like me, does it, mamma?"

"I think it sounds much more like Uncle John," mamma answered, smiling archly.

"He wouldn't be vexed at my using his money like this, would he?"

"I think we may safely conclude that he would not, when he said, distinctly, to spend, or to give away, as would afford you most pleasure."

"How shall we get the things to Rachel 'unknownst,' as Bridget says?"

"Bridget herself shall manage that. I think she can easily contrive to secrete them, after dark, somewhere about the premises."

Examination-day came, — warm, and clear, and bright; and, from morning till night, golden-haired Margaret Ashurst, in white and blue, and brown-haired Rachel Gorham, in white and green, were "neck and neck," as Margaret had said. Professor Frankenstein had delegated the task of awarding the prize to a committee; and, when

it was late afternoon, after a whispered consultation, their chairman rose.

"Two young ladies, Miss Ashurst and Miss Gorham, have so conspicuously borne away the honors of the examination, that it remains to us only to decide between the rival claims of these two. Scarcely anywhere can we discern a shade of difference in the merit of their respective performances; but, in the sole branch of mathematics, it seems to us that Miss Gorham has somewhat the clearest comprehension, and the most ready command of her own resources. If it meets the approbation of Professor Frankenstein, the committee would respectfully suggest that the prize be awarded to Miss Gorham."

Professor Frankenstein stepped forward, and drew from its case the coveted medallion, a lovely cameo head, set in Roman gold.

"I think you have won fairly, my pupil," he said, as he laid the jewel in Rachel Gorham's hand. And then he turned to Margaret Ashurst:

"Nor has your defeat been less glorious than a victory"—and he bent his lofty head toward her—

"in token whereof, let me give you, also, this sign of my approbation;" and he laid in her hand another relic of his foreign wanderings—a seal—with the most perfect head of Pallas cut in intaglio.

Margaret scarcely heard a word of the few concluding exercises, for her joy over her new possession. When all was through with, she went up to Rachel Gorham:

"I think we have both done our best," she said, frankly, "and you have won. I thought that I could not be honestly glad unless I succeeded myself, but I am."

"It will be so much to me," Rachel said, in a low tone. "You can hardly tell,—you who have no need to struggle; but they want a teacher for Danbury Academy next year, and Professor Frankenstein recommended me. Some of the trustees have been here to-day, watching the whole, and ready to engage me if I passed the examination to their satisfaction. One of them is Mary Grey's uncle, and she told me this noon. My heart has been in my mouth ever since."

"Have you missed your necklace to-day?" Mrs. Ashurst asked of happy Margaret, walking home beside her.

"Why, no, mamma, especially since I have not needed it, and the prize I won belongs upon my watch-chain instead," Margaret answered, with happy archness.

"I think your true prize, my darling, is in the gain that enriches your own soul. I know, at least, that you are my best prize, and I am satisfied with it."

OCT 7 1899

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00024814488

